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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001085

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SA/INS AND INR/B

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: NEPAL: PM THAPA APPOINTS SIX MINISTERS FROM HIS PARTY

REF:

THIS CABLE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED, PLEASE TREAT ACCORDINGLY.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY. ON JUNE 11, AFTER CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS, PRIME MINISTER THAPA APPOINTED SIX MINISTERS FROM HIS OWN CENTER-RIGHT PARTY, THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (RPP). WITH ONE EXCEPTION, ALL THE NEW APPOINTEES HAVE PREVIOUS MINISTERIAL EXPERIENCE WITH HALF OF THOSE SERVING DURING THE PARTY-LESS PANCHAYAT ERA. BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION FOLLOWS. THE APPOINTMENTS REFLECT SOME ETHNIC AND GENDER DIVERSITY. MANY PORTFOLIOS REMAIN IN THE CABINET FOR OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES, BUT MANY ARE LIKELY TO COMPLAIN THAT THAPA HAS APPOINTED A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF MINISTERS FROM HIS OWN PARTY. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) AFTER A WEEK OF EARNEST CONSULTATIONS WITH THE MAIN POLITICAL PARTIES, PRIME MINISTER SURYA BAHADUR THAPA ON JUNE 11, APPOINTED FIVE MEN AND ONE WOMAN FROM HIS OWN CENTER-RIGHT PARTY, THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (RPP), TO SIX MINISTERIAL POSITIONS. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FOLLOWS.

DR. PRAKASH CHANDRA LOHANI: MINISTER OF FINANCE

3. (SBU) DR. PRAKASH CHANDRA LOHANI (B. 1944), A U.S.-TRAINED ECONOMIST AND FULBRIGHT SCHOLAR WITH DEGREES FROM INDIANA UNIVERSITY (MBA) AND UCLA (PH.D.), IS A SENIOR LEADER OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (RPP). LOHANI HAS HELD A VARIETY OF GOVERNMENT POSITIONS, INCLUDING FOREIGN MINISTER UNDER SHER BAHADUR DEUBA (1996-1997) AND UNDER LOKENDRA BAHADUR CHAND (EARLY 1997) AND MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE UNDER SURYA BAHADUR THAPA (1998). HE HAS BEEN ELECTED TWICE TO PARLIAMENT FROM THE NUWAKOT DISTRICT OF CENTRAL NEPAL. OF THE BRAHMIN CASTE, LOHANI IS MARRIED WITH THREE DAUGHTERS. WITH EXCELLENT ENGLISH SKILLS, LOHANI IS HIGHLY ARTICULATE AND A COMPETENT ADMINISTRATOR.

KAMAL THAPA: MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION

4. (SBU) KAMAL THAPA (B. 4 AUG 1955), IS A CAREER POLITICIAN WHO IS REPORTEDLY CLOSE TO THE PALACE AND HAS BEEN INVOLVED IN MOST OF THE MAJOR POLITICAL INITIATIVES BACKED BY THE PALACE IN RECENT YEARS. THOUGH ONE OF THE MORE POWERFUL MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (RPP) AS GENERAL SECRETARY, THAPA EARNED A REPUTATION AS AN OPPORTUNIST IN 1996 WHEN HE REPEATEDLY CHANGED SIDES DURING PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING TO BRING DOWN THE SHER BAHADUR DEUBA GOVERNMENT. HIS ELEVATION TO THE RANK OF FOREIGN MINISTER IN JUNE 1997 PROBABLY REFLECTED MORE THEN-PRIME MINISTER CHAND'S INTEREST IN LOCKING THAPA INTO THE GOVERNMENT THAN ANY HIGH ESTEEM FOR HIS ABILITIES. THAPA REMAINED IN THE POST UNTIL APRIL 1998, WHEN THE CHAND GOVERNMENT FELL. HE WAS APPOINTED AS THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE RPP IN MAY 2003. THAPA WAS ALSO ACTIVE DURING THE PANCHAYAT YEARS, RISING TO MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, MINISTER OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT AND MINISTER OF HOUSING AND PHYSICAL PLANNING. THAPA WAS A MEMBER OF NEPAL'S NATIONAL SOCCER TEAM AND, IN 1984, VISITED THE UNITED STATES TO ATTEND THE LOS ANGELES OLYMPICS. OF THE CHETTRI CASTE, THAPA IS MARRIED WITH ONE SON AND THREE DAUGHTERS. HE RECEIVED A MASTERS DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE FROM NEPAL'S TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY IN 1977 AND SPEAKS EXCELLENT ENGLISH AND HINDI.

BUDDHI MAN TAMANG: MINISTER OF PHYSICAL PLANNING AND WORKS

5. (SBU) BUDDHI MAN TAMANG (B. 12 FEB 1956) BEGAN HIS CAREER AT THE LOCAL LEVEL IN DHADING DISTRICT, WEST OF KATHMANDU, IN THE 1980S UNDER THE PANCHAYAT SYSTEM. IN 1994 AND 1999 TAMANG WAS ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF

REPRESENTATIVES. TAMANG HAS HELD THE POSITION OF MINISTER OF LAND REFORMS AND MANAGEMENT SEVERAL TIMES, UNDER SHER BAHADUR DEUBA (1995 - 1997), UNDER LOKENDRA BAHADUR CHAND (1997), AND UNDER SURYA BAHADUR THAPA (1997 - 1998). HE HAS ALSO HELD THE POSTS OF MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (1997) AND MINISTER OF COMMERCE (1997). ONE OF THE LAST OF THE THIRTEEN-MEMBER COUNCIL OF MINISTERS WHO REMAINED WITH THAPA DURING THE NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION IN 1983, TAMANG IS A STAUNCH THAPA SUPPORTER. ALTHOUGH TAMANG HAS A B.A. IN ECONOMICS FROM TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY, HIS ENGLISH IS VERY POOR. HE IS MARRIED WITH TWO SONS AND A DAUGHTER.

HARI BAHADUR BASNET: MINISTER OF EDUCATION
AND SPORTS

16. (SBU) HARI BAHADUR BASNET (B. 1945) BEGAN HIS CAREER IN THE 1970S AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL AS A REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE CENTRAL EAST DISTRICT OF UDAYAPUR. BASNET HELD NUMEROUS CABINET POSITIONS UNDER THE PANCHAYAT REGIME, INCLUDING MINISTER OF FORESTS, FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION (1972-1974), MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (1977 AND 1988-1989), MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS, TRANSPORT AND COMMUNICATIONS (1986-1988), AND MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND WATER RESOURCES (1990) UNDER MARICH MAN SING SHRESTHA. BASNET HAS NEVER BEEN AN ELECTED MEMBER OF THE PARLIAMENT. OF THE CHETTRI CASTE, BASNET EARNED A MASTERS DEGREE IN ENGINEERING IN MOSCOW DURING THE 1960S. HE IS MARRIED WITH TWO SONS.

SARBENDRA NATH SHUKLA: MINISTER OF TOURISM
AND CULTURE

17. (SBU) A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO THE KATHMANDU POLITICAL SCENE, SARBENDRA NATH SHUKLA (AGE IN MID-50S) BEGAN HIS POLITICAL CAREER IN 1994 WHEN HE WAS ELECTED TO THE PARLIAMENT FROM THE RUPANDEHI DISTRICT IN NEPAL'S CENTRAL TERAI AREA. SINCE THEN, SHUKLA HAS HELD SEVERAL MINISTERIAL POSITIONS, INCLUDING ASSISTANT MINISTER, AND THEN STATE MINISTER, OF WATER RESOURCES (1995 - 1996) UNDER SHER BAHADUR DEUBA, MINISTER OF COMMERCE (1997) UNDER LOKENDRA BAHADUR CHAND, AND MINISTER AT THE PRIME MINSITER'S OFFICE (1997-1998) UNDER SURYA BAHADUR THAPA. OF THE BRAHMIN CLASS, SHUKLA IS MARRIED.

RENU KUMARI YADAV: MINISTER OF STATE FOR
WOMEN, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE

18. (SBU) RENU KUMARI YADAV (FEMALE, B. 20 JUN 1963), WHO WAS BORN IN INDIA AND ATTAINED NEPALI CITIZENSHIP THROUGH MARRIAGE, IS ALSO A NEWCOMER TO NATIONAL POLITICAL LIFE. IN 1991, YADAV JOINED THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (RPP) AND WAS ELECTED FROM THE EASTERN TERAI DISTRICT OF SAPTARI TO THE LOWER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT IN 1999. IN 2003, SHE WAS ELECTED TO THE RPP'S CENTRAL COMMITTEE. WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN HISTORY FROM MITHILA UNIVERSITY OF BIHAR, INDIA, YADAV IS OF LOW CASTE. SHE IS A WIDOW WITH ONE SON.

COMMENT

19. (SBU) PRIME MINISTER THAPA'S SIX MINISTERIAL APPOINTMENTS REVEAL SOME ETHNIC AND GENDER DIVERSITY WITH ONE WOMAN (THE 40-MEMBER CABINET THAT WAS DISSOLVED IN OCTOBER 2002 WAS TOTALLY MALE), A TAMANG (AN ETHNIC MINORITY) AND A YADAV (LOW CASTE). THAPA REPORTEDLY HAS SAID THAT THE APPOINTMENTS REMAIN FLEXIBLE IN ORDER TO ACCOMMODATE OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES IF THEY AGREE TO JOIN THE GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, CONFLICTING RUMORS ABOUND IN KATHMANDU POLITICAL CIRCLES ABOUT WHETHER THE LARGEST TWO POLITICAL PARTIES WILL JOIN THAPA'S GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH ROOM REMAINS FOR OTHER PARTIES TO JOIN THE CABINET, SOME WILL LIKELY COMPLAIN THAT THAPA APPOINTED A DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBER OF MINISTERS FROM HIS OWN PARTY, WHICH HELD ONLY 11 OF 205 SEATS IN THE OLD PARLIAMENT.

END COMMENT.

MALINOWSKI